

Overcoming Procrastination By Karen Whiting

The main reasons people procrastinate are lack of interest or purpose in the task, fear of failure, disorganization, and a false sense of timing.

Postponing activities may be tied to your personality. If you're outgoing and love to talk, you may find it easy to prepare and give talks, or counsel people, but dislike sitting down over budgets and plans or doing the details in tasks. If you're task oriented you may not enjoy public speaking or counseling others, but you may be great at administration. Taking care of details, and planning programs.

But Deeds Put-off Must Still Be Done

One key is to know what motivates you and use it as a tool.

- If you're task oriented, list the benefits of completing the task as a motivator.
- If you're people oriented, consider how the task will help others or make it a team effort so you can do it in a social setting.
- If you often procrastinate because you like to sit back and relax, set a reward of doing something you enjoy once you complete a distasteful project.
- In the case of fear of failure, or feeling overwhelmed, lower your expectations for perfection. Find someone who is gifted in the activity and enlist their help, or seek training to build the skills needed.
- If the task seems too big, break it into segments and tackle one part at a time.
- If you're disorganized, then organize by the project. Gather the items needed for a task (or have someone else do that) and set up a place to keep them.
- If you generally underestimate how long tasks take, start doubling the time you allocate.
- Most of all, make a commitment to do the task and keep your word.

The Value of Time Cushions

A cushion is a pad that absorbs shock or provides comfort. In busy schedules people need to build in cushions of time to soften disruptions, unexpected crises, and other unexpected time grabbers, even ones as common as traffic delays. They will also help you slow down and relax since there's flexibility built into your schedule. We need breaks to relax, time to exercise to produce endorphins that stimulate happy feelings, and quiet moments to hear God's voice.

Schedule Time Cushions

- Estimate the time needed for a task and then add a little extra. Even ten minutes can bring relief and give you time to reenergize. A few minutes every hour makes a huge difference to your overall wellbeing.
- Stop setting appointments too close. Stop filling every increment of time in a daily planner. Instead use longer blocks of time and write in breaks.
- Use the breaks to refresh. Drink water, take some deep breaths, close your eyes, and listen for God, relax your muscles, or get up and stretch.
- Make a list of minute stress busters that relieve tension and use the list when time cushions are not filled by interruption or overflow of an activity.

Tips for overcoming common procrastination excuses

- Self-doubt--list past success, post mottos, and give yourself pep talks.
- Self-degradation--Accept compliments, appraise your worth in God's eyes.
- Perfectionism--lower expectations and standards, praise yourself as you work on the project.
- Defeatist attitude/Fear of failure/what others will think-- Look to God not people. Focus on needs you can meet. List past successes.
- Disagreeable tasks--Just do it and get it over with.
- Guilt--Forgive yourself and get started.
- Hostility/anger--realize you need to forgive and let go of control. Then do the deed.
- Overwhelmed by project size and/or time commitment--break it into small pieces and focus on one part at a time. Delegate some of the work.
- Lack of skill/supplies--seek help, training and funding
- Don't know how to start--brainstorm with someone. Ask for help.
- False sense of timing--realistically evaluate time needed for job.
- Priority is low--set a date/time to do it.
- Boredom--Set a reward for doing it and consequences for not doing it.
- Pleasure seeking--Give yourself small rewards for small parts completed.
- Habitual procrastinator--Tackle one task at a time and start a new habit of doing. Ask an accountability partner for encouragement.
- Diversions distract person--Set up area without distractions and lock yourself in.
- Forgetfulness--Write it down and post it.
- Depression, ADD, and other medical problems--Seek professional help and give away the project so it can get done.
- Disorganized-- Gather all needed for the project into a container and set up area for working on the task.
- Desire to socialize instead--invite someone to work with you.
- Interdependency--fear it will ruin or change a relationship. Discuss this with people involved and pray about it.
- Fear of 'work-aholism'--Schedule fun and set boundaries.
- Dreams of escape--Be realistic and face the project
- Lack of interest/motivation--talk to others involved in this or similar project to stimulate interest. List benefits of doing it.
- Crisis-maker-- Waiting causes a crisis and gives you attention. Realize how it hurts others and seek positive ways to get attention and feel loved.